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MSPB REPORT DISCUSSES ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ASSESSING THE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE OF JOB APPLICANTS

Good hiring decisions—and the rigorous assessment needed to make them—are especially important when budgets and staff are limited. When fewer new employees can be hired, each one has greater impact on an agency’s ability to meet new challenges. Better qualified new hires mean higher productivity and better products and services for the public. Effective evaluation of job applicants is not just good business, it is key to achieving the vision of the merit system principles, which includes selection and advancement based solely on relative ability, fair and equitable treatment of applicants, and efficient and effective use of the Federal workforce. A new report from the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, [*Evaluating Job Applicants: The Role of Training and Experience in Hiring*](#), discusses issues and promising approaches in the use of training and experience assessments by Federal agencies.

In times of fiscal austerity, it is more essential than ever for training and experience assessments, such as review of resumes or scoring of occupational questionnaires, to play a central role in Federal hiring. Typically, these measures use *past* accomplishments as a proxy for an applicant’s *present* level of job proficiency. While this approach is widely accepted and well regarded by most applicants and managers, research shows that some training and experience assessments have little ability to predict successful job performance. In addition, practical experience shows that it can be difficult to obtain accurate and detailed information from job applicants. Therefore, it is important that Federal agencies carefully choose assessments, and understand and address common challenges in their utilization.

Making an informed decision about the role of training and experience assessments—and using them well—requires an investment of thought and resources from Federal agencies and Federal managers. Yet, as Chairman Susan Tsui Grundmann stated, “The time that Federal agencies spend to improve assessment practices and make sound, merit-based hiring decisions is time well spent, because every hiring decision has short-term and long-term effects on productivity, retention, and employee engagement.” The report provides research-based information to help agencies and managers make informed decisions on the use of training and experience assessments and outlines strategies to make them more reliable and useful.

MSPB is an independent, quasi-judicial agency that protects the merit system principles and promotes an effective Federal workforce free of prohibited personnel practices. MSPB adjudicates appeals, conducts studies of the merit systems, and reviews the rules, regulations, and significant actions of the Office of Personnel Management. MSPB studies are available on the web at www.mspb.gov/studies.